



Center for Justice & Democracy
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December 15, 2009

The Honorable David A. Paterson
Governor
State Capitol
Albany, NY 12224

The Honorable Sheldon Silver
Speaker of the Assembly
State Capitol
Albany, NY 12248

The Honorable Malcolm Smith
President Pro Tempore, State Senate
State Capitol
Albany, NY 12247

The Honorable John Sampson
Democratic Conference Leader, State Senate
State Capitol
Albany, NY 12247

Dear Governor Paterson, Speaker Silver, President Pro Tempore Smith and Democratic Conference Leader Sampson:

We are writing because we are outraged by revelations in the December 13, 2009, *New York Post* that “The filings for the city’s biggest and most prestigious private, tax-exempt hospitals show at least a dozen CEOs get compensation of \$1 million and up” and this is “even as health-care systems cry poverty, claiming they struggle to break even.” Moreover, the *Post* found, these hospitals are “showering their top execs and department heads with bonuses and perks” like “housing allowances, chauffeurs, first-class air travel, tuition for their kids and country-club memberships.” Judy Wessler, director of the Commission on the Public Health System, called these payments “totally outrageous.... They’re not supposed to act like Wall Street.”

What’s more, as one top industry source noted, taxpayers are helping to foot the bill for this greedy behavior, since “private hospitals are tax-exempt and rely on state and federal money from Medicaid and Medicare, and other government subsidies.”

Even more outrageous, this revelation comes less than two weeks after the Greater New York Hospital Association, which defended the payments, complained that patients injured by

negligent hospital care were cutting into their finances. In testimony before the New York State Senate Standing Committee on Insurance, Committee on Health, and Committee on Codes, GNYHA said hospitals' "poor financial condition" meant that the state should enact extreme limits on patients' legal rights, especially the rights of catastrophically-injured newborns. It even cited studies advocating a \$250,000 damages cap to compensate seriously injured patients for a lifetime of suffering, yet some of these executives are making more than *\$250,000 a month*, without any pain and suffering at all.

In 2007, I was a member of the Governor's Medical Malpractice Liability Task Force, which was supposed to offer recommendations to reduce the shocking incidence of malpractice and medical negligence plaguing the state. Nothing came of this Task Force, but the issues have not gone away. We hope that when the state again begins to address the important issue of reducing the deaths and injuries caused reckless or negligent medical care, it demands that hospitals account for this outrage, and protects the rights of victims hurt by malpractice.

Very sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script, appearing to read "Joanne Doroshow".

Joanne Doroshow
Executive Director